













Whig & Courier

CAPT. JACK BALLEST'S STORY.

(Continued)

It doesn't take long for the years to go by, either on land or on the ocean. They went with me as with other folk. Before I knew it I was second mate, then first mate, then captain. I suppose I should have sailed the sea until they buried me in it, if it had not been for my first mate, John Hamlin. I loved that fellow as I might a brother, if I had a better one than Charles Augustus. At Gibraltar Hamlin got into a row with some English soldiers. They'd all been drinking together, of course I took his part. They had fire-arms about them and used them about each other. I didn't save Hamlin, for they shot him dead; but I got a couple of bullets in me, and I was picked up just as near Davy Jones' locker as any ever was who didn't get in. I got well but was on the invalid list, and as I had laid up a handful of money and was past forty, I made up my mind to stay at home and take care of John Hamlin's orphan children. I had settled down in New York and fetched them home, poor half-starved creatures, for the woman they boarded with was given to drink, and kept them on brand and treacle, and they'd die I must, I put them in black frocks—she'd have felt just as bad in red—and settled down to be comfortable. Soon I looked out for a chaplain to pass Sunday as I ought to be, and the Rev. Elton Tucker's church being handy, I shipped him along with the girls, and as I always did my duty, never pretending not to see the plate when the ward said it up, he used to drop in evenings and talk to me about my soul; and though I can't say but what I dined asleep sometimes, he knew his duty when he did it. A captain's duty is one thing and a chaplain's another.

One day he spoke of poor Hamlin's girl's. Says he, 'You send them to school, I hope.' Says I, 'I haven't done it yet—gals are better off without learning if they can read their Bibles and cipher out their butcher's bill.'

But he kept on, and pretty soon I let him examine 'em. Lord love you, they hardly knew their letters. 'Puss, puss, puss' as well as the mad had gone for him.

'We must find an instructor for them, captain.'

Surely, said I—I wanted to do the best by poor Tom's children that I could—surely, just mention a schoolmarm, chaplain.

Said he, 'my own are under the charge of the person who plays the organ—a highly estimable lady in reduced circumstances. Her school is close by. No. 1—Broome Street.'

So he wrote the name and address on a card, and promised to take the gals there.

Monday morning we set sail. I bought 'em spelling-books and slates and slates, and by nine o'clock we were at the door. Then I looked for the card, and behold, I lost it. I looked for it in my pocket, and could not find the lady's schoolmarm.

'Buty was piping her eye, and Peg was bawling that she wanted to go home. But says I, 'No, no, girls, I don't want you to grow up without a teacher, and that is what the chaplain calls you now.'

So I lugged them in, and made my reverence.

'Duty, dear,' says I; here's two gals as needs instruction. Rev. Elton Tucker recommended you to give it to 'em, and whatever extra it is for playing the organ let 'em learn it; for it is you that works it in the top of this sort of Sunday you know how to do it—Carpenter Jack's daughter, you service. Send your bills to him, and he'll foot them. I ain't bold with women. I'm a bit bashful afore strange uns even yet. And I had looked at her, when I spoke out my name she gave me a great deal of a smothered back. Of course I couldn't help looking at her then, so she was setting down with her handskerchief before her face.

Says I, 'Beg pardon, are you ill, miss?'

Says she, still not looking up, 'Did you say your name was Captain Ballast?'

'Jack Ballast at your service, said I.'

Says she, 'Oh, Jack, don't you know me?'

Says I, 'look up, and I'll make sure.' And she lifted up her face and I saw—well, it was not the pink-checked girl I knew. It was not a girl at all, but in a minute it was Jennie Blue again, a great deal more than I was young Jack Ballast.

'Jennie! says I, 'oh, Jennie, is it really you?'

And then the color came into her cheeks, and her eyes glittered, and she whispered, 'oh, not before school, Jack! for I had caught her to my heart and kissed her.'

We had not much time for play, then, but I came for her again in the evening and took her for a walk. As she told me how the rag time had been shipwrecked, and she blushed dropped down of apoplexy when he knew of it. And how my brother Charles suggested had offered her his hand, and she had no and preferred to end her own loving to marrying one she did not love while there was one living whom she did. And now it was fifteen years ago—fifteen weary years.

Then says I, Jennie, darling, I love you better than ever, now I've found you again—when you told my brother there was some one living you loved, did you mean me?'

'Yes, Jack,' said she.

Says I, 'Now I know you mean me—weather-beaten, scarred old sailor—do you think the same?'

Says she, 'I always shall, Jack.'

'Come on then,' says I. 'And not another word until we can't get to Rev. Elton Tucker's. There's a ring the bell.'

Says she, 'Why have you brought me here, Jack?'

Says I, 'To make the chaplain marry us love.'

Says she, 'its too sudden. I can't. What would people say?'

'To matter for people,' says I.

'And in we walked. And for all she told me that no woman was to marry in a deacon dress and straw bonnet, the chaplain didn't find it any obstacle, but spiced us. And so after nineteen years I got my Jennie for my own.'

I don't think she's sorry for it, and I know I ain't; and as for poor Tom's children, she is a mother to 'em. And whether there's any romance in my story or not, it's a happy one for the ending, as sure as my name is Jack Ballast.

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